

LONDON LITERARY LION ONCE SALOON BOUNCER

Famous Poet and Playwright, Served Drinks and Scoured Brass at Old Colonial Hotel in This City

He held mortal who in London of to-day would disclaim any acquaintance with anything Masfield ever wrote would not be able to do so. The man whose poems are regarded as the greatest of the age never went to school. This great poetical and dissonant in the field of feminine souls sailed before the poet at 11, and in his verse the short and snappy vocabulary which gives King James's Bible and sailors' discourses their characteristic flavor.

Galsworthy, the courteous, the refined, the gentlemanly, goes about proclaiming very frankly that John Masfield is the man of the hour and the man of to-morrow, too, in poetry and in the playwright's craft. He gives more for the "Tragedy of Nan," he says, than for any play written within these past ten years. So there.

Thirty-eight years ago John Masfield was born in Shropshire of English parents. He was a clever boy whose pet aversion was schools and books. He also had a trick of starting on long and unpremeditated tramps without giving sufficient notice to his family. And his family felt so keenly the responsibility which attached to bringing up a young individualist of that ilk that the responsibility found itself very soon shifted onto other shoulders.

The captain of a merchant vessel was, in consideration of a shilling a month, or was it only sixpence, entitled to the services of Johnny boy, who had then just crossed the fourteen year mark. The seven seas knew him for several years. Then, sick and tired of the sea, he took to the land and tramped and tramped, then sailed some more and then tramped again.

During that roving, lazy, somewhat Whitmanesque youth he now and then would dash off lines with an almost Whitmanesque breath. Witness his ballad of London town.

Oh, London Town's a fine town, and London's sights are rare,
And London ale is right ale, and brisk's the London air.
And busily goes the world there, but crafty grows the mind,
And London Town of all towns I'm glad to leave behind.

Then her for croft and hop yard, and hill, field and pond,
With Bredon Hill before me and Malvern Hill behind.
The hawthorn white 't' the hedgerow, and all the spring's attire
In the comely land of Teme and Lugg and Cleat and Cle and Wyre.

Oh London girls are brave girls, in silk and cloth o' gold,
And London shops are rare shops, where gallant things are sold,
And bonnily clinks the gold there, but don't you blink the eye,
And London Town of all towns I'm glad to hurry by.

Then her for covert and woodland and ash and elm and oak,
Teesdale and Malvern roofs, and Worcester chimney smoke,
The apple trees in the orchard, the cattle in the byre,
And all the land from Ludlow town to Bredon church's spire.

Oh London tunes are new tunes, and London books are wise,
And London plays are rare plays and fine to country eyes,
But craftily fairs the knave there, and wickedly fares the Jew,
And London Town of all towns I'm glad to hurry through.

Money for the road, the west road, by mill and forge and fold,
Scent of the fern and song of the lark by brook and field and wold,
To the comely fold at the hearthstone and the tale beside the fire,
In the hearty land where I was bred, my land of home's desire.

One day he met a man who was to exert upon his life and destinies a potent influence for good, Jack B. Yeats. Both spent some time together in Devonshire in the spot that may go down to posterity as a historical landmark at the mouth of the Gara River. Jack B. Yeats has since purchased in that historic location Snail castle, so called, he says, on account of the predilection gastropods show for its thatched roof.

A whole summer Masfield and Yeats were there loafing, talking and indulging in a sport which from a grownpup's point of view appears rather "tame" when indulged in by other grownpups. They built little boats and sailed them down the Gara River. The Gara River is at its greatest width about four feet from shore to shore and its greatest depth never over two feet.

The boats were all the way from ten inches to one yard in length and the two sailed topped the silliness of this pastime by writing quite scientific descriptions of their fleet accompanied by drawings, diagrams and charts and, now and then, a few stanzas due to the pen of the fleet's poet, Masfield.

We reproduce two pages of that treatise called "A Little Fleet." The left hand page drawing shows the fast vessel of the fleet, the Monte, which had a stone under-keel to keep her upright and a piece of string tied round her amidship to keep on the stone. She once hit a rock and then . . .

The right hand drawing represents the Moby Dick, constructed as scientifically as the Monte and fourteen inches long.

These two ships caused Masfield, then 20, to yearn for the sight of real ships and his next voyage took him to America. He held his hand at many things and failed in every one of them. He finally found himself stranded in New York at the beginning of a sultry summer.

His friends, in the same desperate straits, were at that time sharing a garret in Greenwich Village, where he joined them. For several days they lived on doughnuts and on the sandwiches of the free lunch counters, while they tramped about the city looking for work. Masfield used to call at lively stables, little eating houses, bucket shops, factories, laundries and general stores, offering his services at rates which none might call exorbitant. Perhaps he seemed too boyish

for employment, for he always looked very young, and perhaps people shunned him for the uncouthness of his appearance. He was burned to a dull brick color by the sun, for he had passed two months as a common laborer on a farm. He wore the red shirt and the dungarees of the sailor, and an old slouch hat with

There, where the stones are gleamin',
A passer-by can hark
To the old drowned "Monte"
A-singing through the dark.

There, where the gnats are pesky,
They sing like anything;
They sing like Jean de Reszke.
This is the song they sing:

Down in the pebbled ridges
Our old bones sing and shout:
We see the dancing midges,
We feel the skipping trout

Our bones are green and weeded,
Our bones are old and wet;
But the noble deeds that we did
We never can forget.



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a broken brim. Those to whom he applied for work were sometimes kind, sometimes rude. But whether they were rude or kind, they refused, one and all, to have anything to do with him.

His friends fared as he fared, so that in ten days time their condition was almost desperate. "We reduced our expenses to tenpence a day among the three of us," he wrote to a friend in London. "We did our own washing and dried it out of the window. One of us slept each night on the floor upon a pile of newspapers, with a coat for a pillow. Once or twice a week we went to the Eighth Avenue pawnshops or to a clothes store in Bleeker street, where we raised money on our gear, to enable us to buy tobacco or an occasional egg. Once we sallied out and sang songs in the street, but it came on to rain and we were all soaked through before the citizens had had time to get out an injunction."

They were living in this way when Masfield's good star sent him to the Colonial Hotel on Sixth avenue, which has since been torn down. He was in the habit of going there at lunch time, for those who bought a glass of beer at the bar were entitled to a free lunch and a sight of the papers. He relates his experience there:

"The proprietor, a small pale man in a tweed suit, Panama hat and tan boots, came over to me and began a conversation. 'Say,' he said, speaking slowly, 'do you want a good job?' I said I did. 'Well,' he said, 'I want you to help the bar here. Here's a dollar bill; go over to Lee's there and have a hair cut. I'll fix you up with an apron. I'll give you \$10 a month and your board and room and you kin start in right away.'

"When my hair had been clipped I returned to Luke O'Donnell, the hotel proprietor. He brought out a white jacket and an apron, bade me put them on and then sent me behind the bar to clean glasses. There were two other bartenders, one named Johnny, a little merry man with a dark complexion; the other named John, an elderly stout man with a fat red head and a continual smile. My duties were to clean the glasses which these two artists filled for the thirsty. I, who was not an artist and could not mix the subtle drinks in vogue, might only serve beer and cigars. If necessary I had to take a tray laden with curious drinks to men living in the hotel or loafing at the bar tables reading the papers.

"I had to see that the piping through which the beer ran to the taps was kept packed in ice. I had to keep the bar icebox filled from the cold storage cellar. I had to keep the free lunch counter supplied with food, such as pretzels, sliced Bologna sausage, sardines, salt beef, rye bread and potato salad. Twice a week I had to take down the electric light shades, which were of a pinky blue porcelain, to wash them carefully with soap and water. My meals I ate with the proprietor's family at his fat some half a mile away. I slept in a garret in the hotel, right at the top in a wainscot.

"My day began at 10 A. M., when John, the Italian lunch man, banged at my door, singing a lyric which he had composed in my honor. It ran:

John-a, get your son-a, son-a, son-a;
John-a, get your son-a, 'Eep 'oray.

"I then dressed myself and walked to the flat for breakfast, returning to the hotel about 11. I put on an apron and a black alpaca coat and set to work to polish the brass work on the doors and bar. A thick brass footrail ran along the bar, and it was my pride to make this footrail to glow like refined gold. When I had polished this rail and the various door handles I brightened up the beer taps and the decorative brass behind the bar. I then filled the icebox and packed the beer pipes with broken ice. Then I took some money from the bartender and went shopping. I bought strawberries, cherries, lemons, pineapples, lemons, nutmeg, sifted sugar, and bottles of milk, for the concoction of subtle punches, cocktails, fizzes and slings. Sometimes I bought eggs for noggs and fizzes and beat up the whites in a saucer ready for use. I then filled a little silver stand with coffee, berries, oachous

and chocolate drops for those hypocritical toppers who wished to hide the smell of the whiskey they had drunk. I took a handful of cedarwood spills and placed them in a silver box beside the little silver spirit lamp which burned always for smokers desiring a light.

"After finishing this routine work I put on a white coat and cleaned glasses behind the bar, pausing each moment to dry the bar with a duster, for every glass placed upon it left a wet ring on the polished wood. Every now and then I had to run upstairs to answer the electric bell, for the men lodging in the house were a sad set of drunkards, and needed pick-me-ups before they could face the

fort of the memory. And one of the furnished room houses where Masfield spent uncomfortable nights after breakfastless and dinnerless days will soon follow the Colonial Hotel into oblivion. The wrecker's pick will soon obliterate one of the last landmarks to which Masfield's devotees may some day organize pilgrimages. The only shrine of worship left to them will be the benches in Christopher Street Park, a slip of unbuilt ground, shaded by a couple of trees and especially by the surrounding houses. There Masfield repaired of evenings when the summer heat and the fear of encountering an irate landlady fostered in him a sudden interest in astronomy.

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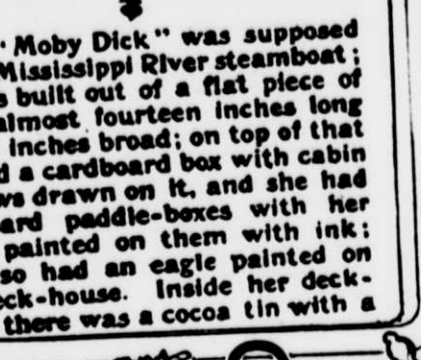
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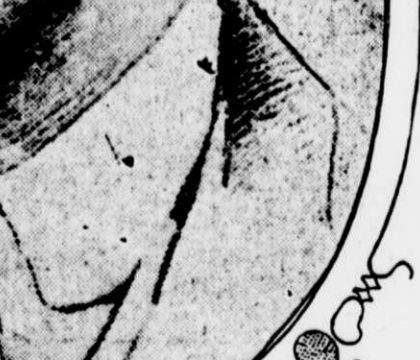
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effort of the memory. And one of the furnished room houses where Masfield spent uncomfortable nights after breakfastless and dinnerless days will soon follow the Colonial Hotel into oblivion. The wrecker's pick will soon obliterate one of the last landmarks to which Masfield's devotees may some day organize pilgrimages. The only shrine of worship left to them will be the benches in Christopher Street Park, a slip of unbuilt ground, shaded by a couple of trees and especially by the surrounding houses. There Masfield repaired of evenings when the summer heat and the fear of encountering an irate landlady fostered in him a sudden interest in astronomy.

THE "MOBY DICK"

She sailed down Gara Valley.
She startled all the cows;
With touchwood in her galley,
And green paint round her bows.

The "Moby Dick" was supposed to be a Mississippi River steamboat; she was built out of a flat piece of board almost fourteen inches long and six inches broad; on top of that she had a cardboard box with cabin windows drawn on it, and she had cardboard paddle-boxes with her name painted on them with ink; she also had an eagle painted on her deck-house. Inside her deck-house there was a cocoa tin with a

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